

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BOGOTA 3979

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CO

SUBJECT: POST-ELECTION OUTLOOK

REFERENCE: BOGOTA 3875

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. WITH 95 PCT OF THE VOTE COUNTED, THE TRADITIONAL TWO PARTY SYSTEM IS FIRMLY IN PLACE IN COLOMBIA. ELECTORAL OPPOSITION TO THE MAJORITY LIBERAL PARTY IS DEFINITELY BASED IN THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY. THE ANAPO MOVEMENT IS DEAD: THE FAR LEFT CONTINUES TO LACK VOTER APPEAL. WITHIN THE LIBERAL PARTY, THE RUN FOR THE 1978 PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION IS NOW MORE OPEN THAN IT HAS BEEN FOR TWO YEAR. THE GOVERNMENTAL/POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS RECEIVED A BOOST FROM THE ORDERLINESS OF THE ELECTIONS, OFFSET, IN IYCT, BY THE SCANT PARTICIPATION. END SUMMARY.

2. THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT EMERGING FROM THE APRIL 18 ELECTIONS WAS THE RESURGENCE OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY. THE NEARLY COMPLETE RETURNS (95PCT OF THE VOTE) SHOW THE CONSERVATIVES WITH 39.3 PCT OF THE VOTE, JUST MISSING THE 40PCT FIGURE THAT PARTY LEADERS CITED AS NECESSARY FOR THE PARTY TO REMAIN A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE TO THE MAJORITY LIBERAL PARTY, WHICH TOOK 52 PCT OF THE VOTE.

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3. THE UPSURGE IN CONSERVATIVE SUPPORT IS TRACEABLE TO A NUMBER OF CAUSES, ONLY SOME OF WHICH CAN VIEWED AS FUNDAMENTAL OR ENDURING. THE APRIL 14 DEATH OF PARTY LEADER AND FORMER PRESIDENT OSPINA UNDOUBTEDLY BROUGHT OUT A SIZEABLE NUMBER OF LAST MINUTE CONSERVATIVE VOTERS WHO WOULD OTHERWISE HAVE ABSTAINED, BUT SOUGHT TO USE THE ELECTION AS A MEANS OF SHOWING RESPECT FOR THE PARTY'S GRAND OLD MAN. IN ADDITION, THE MEMORY OF THE 1974 DRUBBING (31PCT OF THE VOTE) IS STILL GREEN. THE CONSERVATIVES, UNLIKE THEIR PROSPEROUS LIBERAL COUNTERPARTS, COULD ILL AFFORD ABSTENTION. IN THE LIGHT VOTING (SEE BELOW) THE CONSERVATIVES RECEIVED 75PCT OF THE VOTE THAT THEY TOOK IN THE 1974 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS; THE MORE COMPLACENT LIBERALS RECEIVED ONLY 55PCT OF THEIR 1974 VOTE TOTAL. A MORE SIGNIFICANT FACTOR IS THE GROWING AWARENESS AMONG THE ELECTORATE THAT THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY IS THE ONLY EFFECTIVE CHANNEL FOR DISSENT WITHIN THE POLITICAL SYSTEM. THE ANAPO MOVEMENT, WHICH HAS BEEN IN STEADY DECLINE SINCE 1970 AND WAS VISIBLY DISINTEGRATING DURING THE PAST YEAR, OFFERED NO OPPORTUNITY FOR EFFECTIVE OPPOSITION OR PROTEST. THE PROGRAMS AND CANDIDATES OFFERED BY THE FAR LEFT CONTINUED TO LACK ANY SUBSTANTIAL APPEAL TO THE ELECTORATE AT LARGE. THUS THE VOTERS WHO WISHED TO PLACE AN ELECTORAL CHECK OR CENSURE ON THE LIBERAL PARTY HAD ONLY ONE EFFECTIVE WAY TO DO SO. THE CONSERVATIVES WERE PROBABLY ALSO BENEFICIARIES OF THE MOUNTING CONCERN OVER PERSONAL SECURITY AND THE "LAW AND ORDER" QUESTION. WHILE LOPEZ' STERN MEASURES IN DEALING WITH THE STUDENT/LABOR DISORDERS OF MARCH WERE BROADLY SUPPORTED, THERE HAD BEEN, PRIOR TO THE APRIL 2 CLOSING OF THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY, SOME FEELING OF IMPATIENCE WITH WHAT WAS REGARDED IN SOME QUARTERS AS APPROPRIATE APPROACH TO STREET ACTIVISTS. THE ABANDONED LOPEZ EXPERIMENT WITH A MARXIST UNIVERSITY RECTOR ALSO CONTINUED TO RANKLE. THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY WHOSE POPULAR IMAGE RUNS FROM CONSERVATIVE TO REPRESSIVE, UNDOUBTEDLY GAINED VOTES FROM THOSE CONCERNED WITH PERSONAL SAFETY AND PUBLIC ORDERS.

4. FOR ANAPO THE APRIL 18 ELECTIONS PROVIDED CONFIRMATION OF THE PARTY'S DEMISE. SINCE 1970 ITS FOLLOWERS HAD BEEN MOVING BACK TO THE TWO MAJOR PARTIES THAT THEY HAD ABANDONED TO SUPPORT GENERALES. IN THE 1974 ELECTIONS, ANAPO GAINED

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ONLY 9 PCT OF THE VOTE. THIS YEAR, WITH NO LEADERSHIP APPARENT, WITH NO DISCERNIBLE PROGRAM, AND WITH A HARD CORE GROUP OF LEFTIST IDEOLOGIES SCARING OFF THE REMAINING LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE ANAPISTAS, THE PARTY GAINED ONLY 3.7PCT OF THE VOTE, LESS, IN FACT THAN THE FAR LEFT. ONLY 22 PCT OF THOSE WHO VOTED ANAPO IN 1974 CAME OUT IN 1976. SO LITTLE IS NOW LEFT OF THE ONCE MAJOR POLITICAL MOVEMENT THAT THE DISPOSITION OF ITS REMAINING ADHERENTS WILL SCARCELY AFFECT

FUTURE ELECTIONS IN COLOMBIA.

5. THE FAR LEFT AGAIN FAILED TO GAIN ANY SIZEABLE PERCENTAGE OF THE VOTE. DESPITE A NUMBER OF FACTORS THAT SHOULD HAVE HELPED THEM SUBSTANTIALLY, THEY TOOK ONLY 4.7PCT OF THE VOTE. THE LIGHT TURNOUT DID HELP THE COMBINED UNO (UNION OF NATIONAL OPPOSITION)-MOIR (MOVEMENT OF WORKERS FOR INDEPENDENCE AND REVOLUTION) SLATE GAIN IN PERCENTAGE OF THE VOTE FROM 3PCT IN 1974 TO 4.7PCT IN 1976. IN TOTAL VOTE, HOWEVER, THEY GAINED ONLY 2PCT, DESPITE BETTER FINANCING AND ORGANIZATION THAN THEY HAD EVER BEFORE HAD. A PORTION OF THEIR INCREASE, MOREOVER, IS PROBABLY ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE DEMISE OF ANAPO, AS RADICALS, IN COMMON WITH LIBERALS AND CONSERVATIVES, MOVED BACK TO THEIR ORIGINAL PARTIES. FOR THE FAR LEFT, LOESENT DAY COLOMBIAN POLITICS PROVIDE POOR PICKINGS. THE SOCIETY IS STILL THE MOST TRADITIONAL IN LATIN AMERICA: THE LEAST RECEPTIVE TO ALIEN DOGMA AND METHODS. MORE IMPORTANTLY THE TRADITIONAL PARTIES HAVE PRE-EMPTED THE GROUND ON BOTH SIDES OF THE RADICALS. FOR THOSE WHO OPPOSE "THE SYSTEM", LOPEZ AND THE LIBERALS, WHO HAVE PROMISED A GOVERNMENT OF THE LEFT, PROVIDE A WORKABLE ROUTE FOR CHANGE. FOR THOSE WHO OPPOSE THE GOVERNMENT PER SE, THE CONSERVATIVES (WHILE PARTICIPANTS IN THE CURRENT ADMINISTRATION) PROVIDE THE ONLY EFFECTIVE MEANS OF EXPRESSING OPPOSITION. THE FAR LEFT THUS REMAINS FAR MORE EFFECTIVE IN THE STREETS THAN AT THE POLLS.

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6. FOR THE LIBERAL PARTY, THE MOST SIGNIFICANT ASPEKS OF THE ELECTIONS WERE THE EFFECTS ON INTRA-PARTY ALIGNMENTS. DESPITE THE CONSERVATIVE GAINS, THE LIBERALS STILL COMMAND A COMFORTABLE MAJORITY (52PCT OF THE TOTAL VOTE). THE LIBERALS HAD BEEN MORE CONCERNED WITH THE "PRIMARY ELECTION" ASPECTS OF THE BALLOTING THAN WITH CONSERVATIVE OR FAR LEFT CHALLENGES. (THE PARTY HAD RULED THAT 50 PCT OF THE DELEGATES TO THE 1978 NOMINATING CONVENTION WOULD BE CHOSEN BY THE LIBERAL MUNICIPAL AND DEPARTMENTAL ASSEMBLY MEMBERS ELECTED THIS YEAR.) THE PROFUSION OF VOTING LISTS (SOME 5,000) THROUGHOUT COLOMBIA, HOWEVER, ALONG WITH THE INTRUSION OF LOCAL ISSUES, THE FREQUENT ALLIANCES OF DIFFERENT FACTORS AND THE IMPACT OF REGIONALISM AND PERSONALISMO, GREATLY CLOUDED THE "PRIMARY" ASPECT OF THE ELECTION. IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO GIVE A DEFINITIVE VOTE COUNT FOR THE LLERISTAS, TURBAYISTAS, AND LOPISTAS. DESPITE THE MURKINESS, HOWEVER, SEVERAL FACTORS DO EMERGE. CARLOS LLERAS DID LESS WELL THAN EXPECTED, AND INSUFFICIENTLY WELL TO ACHIEVE THE STATUS OF "PEOPLE'S CHOICE" OR TO GAIN ENOUGH DELEGATE STRENGTH TO SWING THE 1978 CONVENTION. AMBASSADOR TURBAY DID BETTER THAN HIS SUPPORTERS HAD EXPECTED, BUT, AGAIN, NOT WELL ENOUGH TO MAKE HIS POSITION A COMMANDING ONE. IN EFFECT, THE THO LIBERAL LEADERS SEEM TO HAVE BLOCKED

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ONE ANOTHER WITH NEITHER ABLE TO DEMONSTRATE DECISIVE SUPPORT. THE LIBERAL RACE FOR THE NOMINATION, HERETOFORE A TWO MAN RACE, WILL NOW WIDEN AS SECOND-TIER CANDIDATES PERCEIVE OPPORTUNITIES IN THE LLERAS-TURBAY STALEMATE.

7. THE BIGGEST WINNERS IN THE APRIL 18 BALLOTING WERE THE COLOMBIAN POLITICAL/GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTIONS. THE SECOND NON-NATIONAL FRONT ELECTION TOOK PLACE IN AN ORDERLY FASHION. WHILE THE TURNOUT WAS VERY LOW (ESTIMATED NOW AT 29PCT AS COMPARED TO USUAL MID-TERM TURNOUT OF ABOUT 36PCT) THE REASONS FOR SUCH A TURNOUT WERE VALID. IT WAS EASTER SUNDAY: THE WEATHER WAS BAD IN MUCH OF THE COUNTRY: THERE WERE NO NEW FACES, AND THE MAJORITY PARTY WAS UNDERSTANDABLY COMPLACENT. THE VOTERS WHO DID SHOW UP, HOWEVER, PROVIDED THE GOC WITH FAIR READING OF THE POPULAR SENTIMENT. THEY DID SO, HOWEVER, IN A MANNER THAT INDICATES THAT COLOMBIA'S INSTITUTIONS ARE STURDY AND WORKABLE. THE OUTLOOK FOR CONTINUED POPULAR PARTICIPATION IS EXCELLENT. THERE WILL BUNDOUBTEDLY BE CHANGES IN COLOMBIA IN THE NEXT SEVERAL YEARS: SUCH CHANGE APPEAR SLATED TO TAKE PLACE WITHIN THE EXISTING FRAMEWORK.

8. OUTLOOK. DESPITE THE CONSERVATIVE GAINS, THE LIBERAL PARTY'S BIGGEST OBSTACLY IS INTRA-PARTY DIVISIONS. THERE IS, AS YET, NO INDICATION OF WHETHER OR NOT THE CONSERVATIVES WILL RUN A PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE TWO YEARS HENCE. IN THE NEXT SEVERAL MONTHS, HGAS THE ELECTORAL TEA LEAVES ARE SCRUTINIZED, THE COLOMBIAN POLITICAL ESTABLISHMENTS WILL START DOWN THE STRETCH FOR THE 1978 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS. THE THREE SIGNIFICANT FACTORS WILL BE THE LIBERAL PARTY, THE CONSEVATIVE PART AND THE STAY-AT-HOME VOTE. ABSTENTION IS A FAR GREATER FACTOR HERE THAN CHANGES OF PARTY AFFILIATION, WHICH RARELY OCCOR. THE ANAPO MOVEMENT, WHICH ALLOWED VOTERS TO RETAIN THEIR ORIGINAL LIBERAL OR CONSEVATIVE PARTY LABEL, WAS BASED LARGELY ON GENERAL RJA'S PERSONAL APPEAL. THERE IS NO FIGURE NOW VISIBLE IN COLOMBIA WITH COMPARABLE POPULAR SUPPORT. THUS, IN THE MONTHS AHEAD, THE TWO MAJOR PARTIES WILL STRIVE TO REMAIN UNITED (THEIR NEW ELECTORAL WEALTH MAY ALSO BRING FACTIONALISM TO THE CONSERVATIVES). COLOMBIAN POLITICAL HISTORY GIVES LITTLE INDICATION THAT

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PARTY COHESION CAN BE MAINTAINED. WITH TWO YEARS YET TO GO, AND WITH MANY INPONDERABLES INTERVENING, THE 1976 ELECTION RETURNS POINT TO HIGHLY FACTIONALIZED 1978 ELECTIONS WITH A STRONGSYOSSIBILITY OF DISGRUNTLED LIBERALS SEEKING ELECTION COALITIONS WITH THE NOW ATTRACTIVE CONSERVATIVE SECTOR. FOR THE FAR LEFT, WITH ELECTORAL AVENUES APPARENTLY CLOSED TO THEIR CANDIDATES, THE STREETS MAY BECOME MORE ATOACTIVE THAN THE POLLING PLACES. THE GOC INSTITUTIONS, HOWEVER, HAVE SHOWN THAT THEY CAN HANDLE STREET VIOLENCE WITHOUT BECOME UNDULY OPPRESSIVE. THE APRIL 18 ELECTIONS DEMONSTRATED THE COLOMBIANS PREFERENCE TO WORK-FOR CHANGE OR STATUS QUO--WITHIN THOSE INSTITUTIONS. THE OUTLOOK, ACCORDINGLY, IS FOR TWO YEARS OF LIVELY BUT LEGAL POLITICAL ACTIVITY IN COLOMBIA.

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